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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4367

INFO RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE

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RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 5517

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NEW DELHI 003664

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PK, IN

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER TALKS HUMAN RIGHTS WITH KASHMIRIS  
WHILE TERRORISTS MASSACRE THEM

REF: NEW DELHI 3549

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Classified By: PolCouns Geoff Pyatt for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

**¶1. (C) SUMMARY:** Even as the Prime Minister's talks with representatives of the people of Jammu and Kashmir state stretched into their second day, terrorists killed ten more villagers in Rajouri. During the first day's roundtable discussions, and following a security briefing by the Army, the PM stressed to security forces that "it is possible and desirable that you should be firm but humane, effective and efficient, in control, but unobtrusive." He also urged forces to ensure "zero tolerance" for custodial killings. The PM announced that the roundtable would meet again, that he would speak with anyone who renounced violence, that he hoped the Hurriyat would come back to the table, and approved the formation of five subgroups to examine autonomy, Delhi-Srinagar relations, human rights, governance, and other difficult issues. Meanwhile, demonstrating their growing irrelevance to Kashmiri political dynamics, the Hurriyat told the papers that they spent the day tidying up their houses, although the PM graciously left the door to dialogue open despite their abrupt last-minute refusal to meet him (reftel). Our Hurriyat contacts acknowledged privately that the PM's human rights message had been positive. End Summary.

KASHMIRIS, LEND ME YOUR EARS

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¶2. (C) The Prime Minister visited Srinagar May 24 for two days of talks with leading representatives of the people of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). At a roundtable conference on the future of the state, the PM exchanged views with senior elected Members of Parliament from Congress, PDP, and National Conference, as well as the more obscure Panther Party, the PDF, and two flavors of Communists, as well as Paharis, Kargil residents, Hindu Pandits, and Sikhs. Buddhist Ladakhis and the BJP stayed away, as did the Mirwaiz faction of the All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC). Pressing ahead despite the absence of the moderate separatists (reftel), the PM announced plans to establish five subgroups within the roundtable to focus on security, human rights, autonomy, governance, the state/federal relationship, economic growth, and ways to bring the people on both sides of the Line of Control closer. He also announced that the roundtable would meet again, kept the door open to the Hurriyat by saying he hoped they would come back to the table, and, directing a message to groups like Hizb-ul-Mujahideen who have signaled an increasing unease with violence perpetrated by Lashkar-e-Tayiba and Jaish-e-Muhamed, promised to meet with anyone who renounced violence.

READ MY LIPS: NO HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

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¶3. (C) The headline from day one of the deliberations was the Prime Minister's declaration following a briefing by security forces that there should be "zero tolerance" for custodial killings. Following the security meeting, the PM gave security forces their walking orders: "Be firm but humane, effective and efficient, in control, but unobtrusive." Long-time Kashmir watcher Radha Kumar of Delhi Policy Group told D/PolCouns that it came as an astounding surprise for

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her to see a Prime Minister of India speak so bluntly to security forces about the need to respect human rights -- "and in Kashmir, itself, no less!" Kumar argued that such a statement would have been "hard to imagine" coming from any past Indian PM.

TEN INNOCENTS MURDERED

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¶4. (C) The Prime Minister's human rights message was lost on terrorists, who slaughtered a further ten villagers in Rajouri near Punch even as he met with the roundtable May 25. The attack follows a wave of five grenade-throwing incidents May 24 in Srinagar that injured several at locations around town despite the security cordon. Security in Srinagar was so air-tight that tourists complained of ruined vacations and our contacts said they could not even go out their gates. Recognizing the disruption his presence was causing, the PM announced that he would return to Delhi a day early following a four p.m. press conference May 25.

THE HURRIYAT RE-ARRANGES ITS SOCK DRAWERS

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¶5. (C) In a move widely regarded by Delhi observers and newspapers commentators as disastrous for their standing, the Hurriyat stuck with their announcement to boycott the roundtable, although the PM repeatedly stressed that he would still welcome dialogue with them. With all of Srinagar under an unprecedented security clamp-down that frustrated tourists and amounted essentially to a curfew, the Hurriyat leaders told newspapers that they puttered in their gardens, watched Pakistan beat West Indies in cricket (a subtle pro-Pak dig at India's recent loss to Windies), and tidied up their houses.

AND WHO NEEDS 'EM, ANYWAY?

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¶6. (C) Press headlines such as "Why do we tolerate the Hurriyat?" appeared in Indian media, and commentators said

the Hurriyat had shown "contempt" for a PM who had done more than any to lift them up and give them a forum for meaningful exchange with Delhi. Yusuf Jameel of "Asian Age" newspaper said the PM had not boxed in the Hurriyat nor did he embarrass them even though they had been churlish. Despite their feigned indifference, Hurriyat member Professor Abdul Ghani Bhat told us by telephone from Srinagar that the PM's human rights message had been "all positive" and hinted that the Hurriyat would go back to dialogue with the PM once the roundtable ended. Bilal Lone was skeptical about the human rights promises unless India really delivers. Naeem Khan said the PM's words "generated hope amongst the people."

COMMENT: LECTURE THE TERRORISTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

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**¶17.** (C) Kashmiris for decades have labeled India a violent oppressor and lauded separatists of every stripe as liberators. It is highly ironic, therefore, to have the Prime Minister of India call for human rights and zero tolerance for custodial killings even as terrorists kill ten Kashmiris to send a nihilistic message rejecting his dialogue process. Our Kashmiri contacts are beginning to wonder why

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the Indians are preaching restraint when some separatists continue to indulge in violence. Meanwhile, their self-appointed political leaders are nursing wounds of a different kind after slamming the door on the one Indian leader who sincerely wants to hear their views. As usual in Kashmir, the self-inflicted wounds are worse than anything the GOI dishes out. END COMMENT.

BLAKE